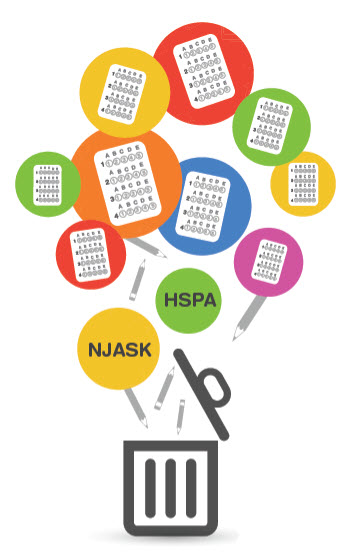
**Goodbye NJASK... So long HSPA... Hello PARCC**

**This spring’s field testing of the PARCC assessments will be followed by full implementation next year**

**Written by Amy Fratz, NJEA staff**

When the N.J. Department of Education (NJDOE) joined PARCC in 2010, it became clear that standardized testing was about to change in the Garden State. A few months from now, the transition from NJASK and HSPA to the PARCC assessments will begin as students in some districts will field test the new exams. One year later (spring 2015), all New Jersey students in grades 3-8, algebra 1, geometry, algebra 2, and English grades 9, 10, and 11 will take the new tests.

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) is a consortium of 18 states plus the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands that are working together to develop a common set of assessments for grades K-12 in English language arts and math anchored in college and career readiness and aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). PARCC’s work is being funded through a four-year grant of $186 million from the U.S. Department of Education as part of the federal Race to the Top program.

 According to PARCC, the new assessments, which will be ready for administration during the 2014-15 school year, will help establish a pathway to college and career readiness by the end of high school, provide information regarding students’ progress toward this goal from grade 3 on up, and provide teachers with timely information allowing them to give informed instruction and provide students with support.

PARCC will offer its member states summative required components and non-summative optional components. Students will complete all PARCC assessments on computers or tablets and not with paper and pencil.

In New Jersey, the summative required assessment will also provide data for accountability uses. A teacher’s student growth percentile (SGP) rating will be calculated from student scores on the performance-based (PBA) and end-of-year (EOY) assessments. The PBA portion of the assessment will be administered after approximately 75 percent of the instructional year is completed to allow for both machine and human scoring. The EOY assessments will be administered after approximately 90 percent of the instructional year has passed. PARCC’s goal is to have data from the performance-based assessment and end-of-year assessment returned to districts before the end of the school year.

**Participation in PARCC spring field testing**

New Jersey is one of 14 states that will be participating in the PARCC field test this spring. Schools have been selected through a random scientific sample to ensure a broad cross-section of student demographics. The NJDOE estimates that one-tenth of the state’s third through eighth graders will participate in some form of the field tests. Only one to two classes per grade level per school will take the field tests, which will consist of part of the performance-based or the end-of-year piece in English language arts (ELA)/literacy or math, but not both subjects.

At press time, the NJDOE had not released the list of participating schools or to find out if students in your school will be involved in the field testing, see your principal.

**PARCC summative required ELA/literacy assessments**

The ELA/literacy PBA assessments will include a research simulation, a literary analysis, and a narrative task. Each task will require students to read one or more texts, answer several short comprehension and vocabulary questions, and write an essay that requires them to draw evidence from the text(s). The ELA/literacy EOY assessments will include four to five texts, both literary and informational (including social science/historical, scientific, and technical texts at grades 6-11). A number of short-answer comprehension and vocabulary questions will also be included for each text.

PARCC states that the results of the ELA/literacy assessments will be reported in three major categories:

1. ELA/Literacy
2. Reading and comprehending a range of sufficiently complex texts independently
3. Writing effectively when using and/or analyzing sources.

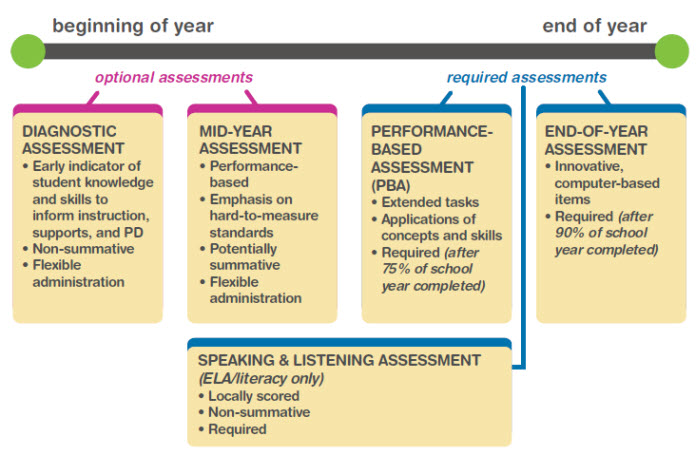
The students’ ELA/literacy results will be based on a composite of their reading and writing scores. Students will receive both a scale score and performance level scores for ELA/Literacy, and scale scores for the reading and writing categories.

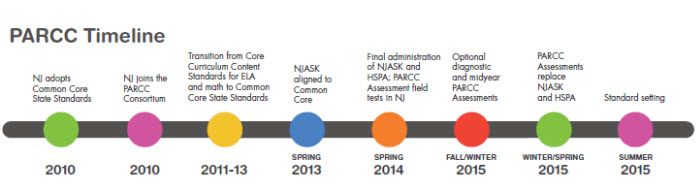
In English Language Arts/literacy, an additional required non-summative component will be administered to assess students’ speaking and listening skills. Although this component is required, the score will not be included in the summative score. This component will be locally scored. PARCC has not announced a release date for this required component, and there will be no field testing of the speaking and listening assessment in New Jersey.

**PARCC summative required mathematics assessments**

The mathematics PBA assessments at each grade level will include both short- and extended-response questions that focus on conceptual knowledge and skills, and the mathematical practices of reasoning and modeling. The mathematics EOY assessments will be comprised primarily of short-answer questions focused on conceptual knowledge, skills, and understandings. The overall results of the mathematics assessments will be reported in terms of scale and performance level scores.

The assessment score for each student will include the results from both the PBA and EOY assessment components. PARCC has not yet determined how scores from the PBA and EOY assessments will be weighted; Data provided through item development research and field testing during the 2013–14 school year will inform this decision.





**PARCC non-summative optional assessments**

PARCC will also release two non-summative assessment components that states and districts will have the option to use for a fee. The NJDOE has not yet announced its position on the use of these optional tests that generate timely information for informing instruction, interventions, and professional development during the school year.

The Diagnostic Assessment (scheduled for use in 2014-15) is designed to be an indicator of student knowledge and skills that will assist educators to tailor student instruction and recommend supports and professional development to meet student needs. The Mid-Year Assessment, which will mirror the PARCC Performance-Based Assessments, focuses on difficult-to-assess standards, including writing effectively when analyzing texts in ELA/literacy and applications/modeling and reasoning in mathematics. This assessment will provide students and educators the ability to work with constructed response and machine scorable items for formative purposes only. Its design will help to inform curriculum, instruction, and professional development.

The Mid-Year Assessment, the K-1 Formative Assessment Tools and the Diagnostic Assessments in Grades 2-8 are scheduled for field testing in 2014-15 with optional use beginning in 2015-16.

**Number and length of testing sessions**

The PARCC performance-based assessments (PBA) and end-of-year (EOY) assessments will be administered in a total of nine sessions. At each grade level, the PBA component will require five sessions, which includesthree sessions for ELA/literacy and two sessions for mathematics. The EOY component at each grade level will require four sessions– two for ELA/literacy and two for mathematics.

**The total time on task will be:**

* Grade 3           8 hours
* Grades 4-5      9 hours, 20 minutes
* Grades 6-8      9 hours, 25 minutes
* Grades 9-10    9 hours, 45 minutes
* Grade 11         9 hours, 55 minutes

PARCC officials have stated these parameters will include ample time for students to demonstrate their knowledge. Additional time will be allowed for students with disabilities who have an unlimited/untimed time accommodation documented in their Individualized Education Plan. PARCC has promised additional information on scheduling testing sessions and accommodation policies for students with disabilities and English learners. [More information on time on task](http://njea.org/njea-media/pdf/PARCC_TimeonTask.pdf?1412608428861)

**Number of test administration days (testing window)**

Preparing for PARCC’s computer-based tests will mean a change from how schools have planned for and scheduled paper-based assessments. PARCC feels that the computer-based assessments will allow for more flexible scheduling than current paper-based tests and ultimately become more integrated into instruction. The testing window described below is designed to provide flexibility for schools that are in the process of building the capacity to administer tests via computer.

Schools will have a maximum of 20 school days to administer the PBA component and a maximum of 20 school days to administer the EOY assessment component. Although the testing windows will span 20 days for each component, PARCC notes that schools should be able to complete administration of the tests in fewer days if they have sufficient capacity to allow large numbers of students to be tested simultaneously.

The 20-day windows are provided primarily to provide sufficient opportunity to administer the assessments via computer in schools with a limited number of devices and limited bandwidth. While the testing window in some schools may span as many as 20 days, individual students will participate in testing sessions for both the PBA and EOY components over a period of five to nine days.

**From paper and pencil to computers and tablet**

The expectation is that all students will take the PARCC assessments on computer. PARCC officials believe that computer-based testing will be engaging for students and ultimately allow for faster scoring and reporting of results. The PARCC assessments will be available in paper and pencil format for students with disabilities whose Individualized Education Plans (IEP) require it, and for schools that have gained approval for paper and pencil-based testing from the NJDOE.

Of course, there is widespread concern that districts will not have the necessary technological infrastructure by next spring. To assist schools in planning for an adequate number of devices, PARCC has published some guidance on the minimum and a recommended number of computers has been provided for schools; stipulations for schools that will be testing three grade levels (e.g., K-5, 6-8, 9-12 schools) are different from those that will be testing six grades (e.g., K-8 schools). A school that has the minimum number of computers (two children per device) would be able to administer the assessments within 20 days, while a school that meets the recommended number of deviceswill be able to administer the assessments in fewer than 20 days.Districts may wish to recommend*lower*student to device ratios that will ensure that schools can continue with computer-based instruction at the same time as they are conducting computer-based assessments. [More information on devices](http://njea.org/njea-media/pdf/PARCC_ComputerBasedTesting.pdf?1412608428861)

**What materials are available to help teachers prepare?**

Regardless of whether your school participates in the field testing, **PARCC will provide all schools with computer-based practice tests this spring**. These tests will be similar in content to the field test and will give districts the opportunity to become familiar with administering computer-based assessments.

**Last August,** **PARCC released sample items for a few grade levels in both ELA/literacy and math**. The sample items indicate how PARCC is developing tasks to measure the critical content and skills found in the CCSS and demonstrate the kind of content that will be on the 2014-15 assessments. **PARCC also provided a set of paper-based items in October to include item samples at every grade level.**

**PARCC is expected to re-release these sample items on the technology platform that students will use for the spring field test.**This will allow students and educators to utilize the tools and familiarize themselves with the functionalities that will be on the assessment.

**For ELA/literacy, PARCC has developed draft rubrics for the scoring of the three “prose constructed response” (PCR) items, which are available at**[***www.parcconline.org***](http://www.parcconline.org/)**.** The language of the rubrics is aligned to the CCSS, the PARCC writing evidences, and the PARCC content specific performance-level descriptors at each grade level. To ensure reliable scoring, PARCC will create an item-specific scoring guide that includes sample scored and annotated student writings that were produced in response to a specific task.

**PARCC has also released information about the non-summative components of the assessment system.** These tools and resources are designed for students, teachers, and parents to support the mastery of the knowledge and skills of the CCSS.

**In June 2014, PARCC plans to release Assessment Professional Development Modules for teachers.**

**Student performance levels**

Under New Jersey’s current testing program, students can score at Advanced Proficient, Proficient, or Partially Proficient levels. Under PARCC, there will be five performance level descriptors (PLDs) in ELA/literacy and mathematics. Performance levels, which are sometimes referred to as "achievement levels," are the broad categories used to report student performance on an assessment, and the PLDs further describe what that performance means. In other words, they explain what students at each performance level know and can do relative to the grade-level or course content standards assessed. Each PARCC performance level will also have a specific minimum scaled score connected to it – sometimes referred to as a cut score. The cut scores for PARCC performance levels will be determined through a standard-setting process in the summer of 2015.

**The five established PLDs include:**

**Level 5:** Students performing at this level demonstrate a**distinguished**command of the knowledge, skills, and practices embodied by the Common Core State Standards assessed at their grade level.

**Level 4:** Students performing at this level demonstrate a **solid** command….

**Level 3:** Students performing at this level demonstrate a **moderate**command….

**Level 2:** Students performing at this level demonstrate a **partial**command….

**Level 1:** Students performing at this level demonstrate a **minimal**command….

The actual grade- and subject-specific performance-level descriptors get into much more detail. In ELA/language arts, for instance, they track how well students must perform in various ways with very complex text, moderately complex text, and "readily accessible" text at each level of the test. The specific PLDs will inform educators about the types of performances needed in grades 3-8 for students to demonstrate that they are prepared to engage successfully in further studies as well as the types of performances that will be needed in high school for students to demonstrate progress toward college- and career-readiness (CCR). They will also provide information in developing curricular and instructional materials, serve as the basis for PARCC standard setting in summer 2015, and inform item and rubric development for the PARCC assessments.

The PLDs will undergo a number of iterations as data on student performance are  collected during PARCC item development research in 2013, field testing in spring 2014, and the first operational year of administration in 2014-15. This process is meant to ensure that the performance level scores students receive on PARCC assessments are a valid reflection of what they know and can do, and at the high school level in particular, whether students have attained the knowledge and skills necessary to earn a college- and career-ready determination.

PARCC, in collaboration with its higher education partners, has adopted Performance Level 4 as the score for earning the determination of college- and career-readiness. Students who attain a CCR determination in ELA/literacy and/or mathematics of a Level 4 or 5 will have direct entry into relevant entry-level, credit-bearing courses without the need for remediation. Nine public colleges and universities and six private colleges in New Jersey have committed to participate in PARCC. Together, these institutions educate nearly 22 percent of the freshmen entering public colleges and universities in New Jersey. For more information and a list of the participating New Jersey institutions, visit *www.parcconline.org/postsecondary*.



**Online resources for Common Core and PARCC**

**PARCC Assessments**

* [www.parcconline.org](http://www.parcconline.org/)
* [www.parcconline.org/classroom](http://www.parcconline.org/classroom)
* [www.parcconline.org/samples/item-task-prototypes](http://www.parcconline.orgsamples/item-task-prototypes)

**Common Core State Standards**

* [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org/)

**Student Achievement Partners**

* [*www.achievethecore.org*](http://www.achievethecore.org/)

**NEA CCSS Toolkit**

* [www.nea.org/assets/docs/14047-CommonCore\_Toolkit\_14.pdf](http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/14047-CommonCore_Toolkit_14.pdf?1412608428861)

**NJDOE**

* [www.state.nj.us/education/sea](http://www.state.nj.us/education/sea)
* [www.njcore.org](http://njea.org/news-and-publications/njea-review/january-2014/www.njcore.org)

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